

From Tradition to Modernisation

The Romanian Family in Transylvania in the Modern Era (1850-1918)*

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TRANSYLVANIA IS one of the major provinces of today's Romania and, starting with the dawn of the Middle Ages a thousand years ago, the Romanians were joined here by several other peoples which would later influence to varying degrees the history of this land. Among the peoples in question we find the Hungarians, the Germans, the Jews, the Armenians, the Serbs, the Slovaks, etc. Of course, their presence among the Romanians was not uniform either from a chronological point of view (as they arrived here in different periods), or from a demographic one, as some came in larger numbers than others. Since the Middle Ages, Transylvania has had a population structure dominated by three main nations (Romanians, Hungarians, and Germans) and six major denominations (Orthodox, Roman-Catholic, Greek-Catholic, Calvinist or Evangelical Reformed, Lutheran or Evangelical ca—*Confessio Augustana*, and Unitarian), accompanied by other nations and denominations which, taken together, never accounted for more than 2 or 3% of the population. Specialists normally reserve the name *Transylvania* for the area surrounded by the Carpathians, but most people use the name for that part of Romania consisting of several regions that had a more or less similar destiny across the centuries: historical Transylvania or Ardeal (which, between the middle of the 16th century and 1867, when it was annexed by Hungary, remained an autonomous principality under Turkish and, after 1699, under Habsburg suzerainty), Banat, Crişana, and Maramureş. These territories grouped under the umbrella name of Transylvania were gradually conquered by the Kingdom of Hungary starting with the 11th and the 12th centuries, partially came under Turkish control after 1541, and ended up under Austrian rule after 1699. Until the First World War, Transylvania's central and regional authorities remained almost exclusively in Hungarian, Saxon, and Szekler hands.

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In what follows we shall present a few aspects concerning the ethnic structure of Transylvania during the period in question (1850-1918). The first census, taken in 1850–1851, showed the undeniable Romanian dominance in historical Transylvania (Ardeal) (59.5%). During the dualist period (1867-1918) the Romanians decreased from 54.9% in 1880 to 53.7% in 1910, the Germans also decreased from 12% in 1880 to 10.7% in 1910, but the Hungarians increased from 25.2% to 31.6%. The causes behind this rapid increase in the percentage of Hungarians are several in number, often mentioned being the higher natural increase of the Hungarians, the smaller number of emigrants given by this ethnic group, and only “to a small extent” the ethno-linguistic assimilation of the Jews, the Armenians, and of the several thousand Czechs, Poles, and Italians brought here by the industrialization.

The approach of family and matrimonial behaviour of the Romanians in Transylvania between the middle of the 19th century and World War I, in the context of such phenomena at the level of the whole population of the province (Romanians represented in 1850 about 55% of the Transylvanian population), mostly reflect the modernising tendencies that affected the Transylvanian society. Transylvania’s modernization between the 1848-1849 Revolution and World War I also meant, in the context of our topic, the modernisation of the demographic behaviour; this is explained by the fact that, beside concrete and visible aspects of the development and modernisation process of the Transylvanian society, the transformations with the greatest impact on human destinies operated at the level of daily existence. “What is now changing is the rhythm of private, daily life” (Mitu, 2000, p. 195). This involved, among others, changing the conditions of family formation, spreading birth control, increasing illegitimacy, increasing the number of divorces, the still timid revolt of the young towards the matrimonial arrangements made by their parents or society etc.

Sometimes sources do not allow us to see the complexity of such a phenomenon, but we have no reserve in stating that before the burst of World War I, family and matrimonial relations of the Romanians in Transylvania were not the same as they were at the middle of the 19th century; this was most obvious in the urban environment, but this change was also felt in the rural area. Around 1914 more and more testimonies of the local elites (especially priests, but also the literature and press of those times etc.) blamed the recent alternation of manners, quoting the exemplary morality of previous times. This approach of invoking the “golden age” and idealising social and moral relations from a finished era contains frequent references to family and morality, together with aspects related to attending the church, respecting the old etc. Consequently, family becomes an important “laboratory” which allows perceiving correctly the transition from the traditional to the modern inside the Romanian community from Transylvania between the 1848-1849 Revolution and the First World War.

WE WILL further try to discuss about the **agents of change**, the factors that caused the re-dimensioning of the demographic behaviour and of family relations among the Romanians. First of all we should mention the *dissolution of feudal relations* after the 1848-1849 Revolution, which meant not only the building up of different juridical and social-economic relations, based on the exchange economy and the circulation of capital, labour force etc, but also the beginning of other matrimonial behaviours and of certain moral relations inside the community. A direct consequence of the dissolution of feudal relations was **the increased mobility of the population**. The number of the persons who travelled for seasonal work inside and outside the province increased every year, while emigration started to develop gradually; after 1900 it took greater and greater proportions.

For example, with the occasion of the 1850 census, the authorities noticed the absence of 30,731 inhabitants, while in 1857 the number of those absent was of 54,566: most of them had gone to work in Romania. Although statistics are incomplete, in 1863, 62,827 persons came from Transylvania to Romania with passports and in groups, while in 1865, 67,623 persons. Recent research has revealed the seasonal character of those emigrations, especially with the occasion of spring, summer and autumn agricultural works. There is no doubt that those people travelling outside the traditional rural area (either inside Transylvania or the Austrian monarchy, or in Romania) entered into contact with a world different from the one they left at home; these life experiences generated interpersonal relations that affected the way of thinking of the Romanians in Transylvania.

Later, between 1899 and 1914, the number of those who emigrated from the province increased to about 400,000; most of them chose to go to America. The fact that about 20% of those who emigrated between 1899 and 1914 returned home clearly shows their intention to save money in order to return home, to buy land and to improve their socio-economic position in their native village. Obviously, this few years' American experience, including the weeks spent while travelling (by train and by ship), influenced the way of thinking of those persons, but also of those they interacted with when returning home. Confronted with the more and more visible destruction of the traditional moral order, priests often accused the contact with foreign countries, developing the cliché according to which "we learn more bad things than good ones from foreigners" (Soroștineanu, 2006, p. 156).

The beginning of urbanisation and industrialisation in Transylvania, with economic and demographic effects visible rather towards the end of the 19th century, affected, like in the case of other cultural areas, inter-human relations: the area and criteria of marital selection, the family life cycle and especially the authority of the church concerning private life. Like in the case of the Hungarians or Saxons from the province, the surplus of the Romanian rural population emigrated towards the main Transylvanian towns; many peasant children began to work in factories; their number increased every year. The metamorphosis of those peasant children became

obvious first of all by their external aspect: they gave up their traditional popular costumes and adopted clothes specific for the work inside a factory and for the life in towns. Towards 1914 there were more and more references to young people (boys who worked in industry, but also girls employed as maid servants in towns) who preferred to wear "*German clothes*" (expression used at that time by the Romanians when referring to those wearing urban clothes). Of course, beside the material change reflected in the urban clothes, there was also a change in the social and moral behaviour of the young people who had gone aboard; unfortunately, it could be studied less in terms of statistics, but it was real for sure.

Another agent of change was the **state**. **Secular legislation**, starting with the introduction of the Austrian civil code during the first years of the sixth decade until the laws of 1894-1895 of the Hungarian state, gradually diminished the official attributions of the church concerning family and matrimonial relations (Mârza, 2002, p. 211sq). For centuries the church had been the institution legally entitled to control and solve almost exclusively the issues related to a person's birth, marriage or death; gradually, in the second half of the 19th century, as society became secular and the state modernised, the competences of the church were limited to the detriment of state's specialised institutions; this process ended in Transylvania by the Parliament in Budapest's introducing the 1894-1895 laws, which took over exclusively the documents related to the civil status and the solving of the aspects related to marriage, matrimonial life and divorce. Although secularisation, which made significant headway towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, gave an impetus to the modernisation phenomenon, the decisive factors were the socio-economic developments ensuing the dissolution of feudal relations and the construction of a society based on market economy and industrialism, which made their mark upon the individual and the community. Gradually, in the Transylvania of the years prior to World War I, a growing number of individuals stopped being prisoners of outside forces (be they religion, community, family, etc) and were increasingly animated by the desire of fulfilling their own desires and interests. Paradoxically, the state met their expectations, first by eliminating the canonical impediments, freeing the individual from a host of religious constraints, an emancipating action that was taken however to serve the interest of the state. What came next was an evident emancipation of the individual coupled with the liberalisation of family and matrimonial relationships, not only in the case of the Romanians, but also at the level of the whole population (Bolovan, 1999, p. 205).

Thus, a direct consequence of the introduction of secular legislation in the field of marriages was the elimination of a long list of interdictions introduced by the church in time; the constraints of such interdictions could sometimes be eliminated by Episcopal or archiepiscopal exemptions. Of course, all these exemptions submitted to the superior ecclesiastical instances by the community's vicar brought money to the church; this could have disappeared after 1895. Thus, the state did not continue to oblige widowers or widows to wait one year after the death of their

husband/wife in order to marry again when family rebuilding for the normal functioning of households imposed a shorter mourning period (“sorrow” as it was called in the ecclesiastical legislation).

After 1895, the complicated family network described into details by the church dogmas (that limited drastically the possibilities to choose the partner in the rural area, especially inside small and medium communities) disappeared. It is well known that there were some rich families in the Romanian villages, who enjoyed social prestige inside the community and were chosen godparents by almost all couples. Of course, in terms of church legislation this meant family relations of godfathers with almost all families from the village, which practically made impossible the marriage of these godparents’ children with the members of the families they were linked to in this capacity. However, sometimes, by exemptions submitted to ecclesiastical instances (which also involved more marriage fees), they could obtain the church’s approval. The Romanian ecclesiastical environment reacted vehemently to the Hungarian secular legislation of 1894-1895; beside theological and national aspects, the economic issue played a very important role as the church was thus practically condemned to lose important revenues. Or, given the conditions of dualist Hungary, in which Romanians’ churches did not benefit from state’s aid in subsidizing priests’ wages and keeping confessional schools, it appears obvious why metropolitan bishoprics both in Sibiu and in Blaj protested incessantly.

Orthodox priests accused the clerks from the registrar’s office of being the main instrument of concluding a civil marriage but also of flagrant interference in diminishing the authority of religious marriage. Believers’ complaints in this respect could easily be misinterpreted. It was the case of two young people from Intorsura-Buzăului/ Trei Scaune *Protopopiat* (territorial and administrative unit of the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic Church, which includes several parishes), called Ioan Stroia and Domnica Florii. In their complaint sent to Sibiu they informed the *Consistoriu* (a type of bishopric government) that they had been asked a 60-crown marriage permission (they were step cousins) they could not afford to pay; consequently, they only concluded civil marriage. Before the *protopop* (the chief of several priests of a region) they admitted that the complaint had been drafted by the registrar—an ancient reformed priest—and then it had been translated by the Jewish innkeeper in a barbarian Romanian. As they had no blood ties, the young couple caused parishioner’s sympathy, because, being poor, they could not pay any marriage fee. As the *‘sinodul arhidiecezan’* (general annual meeting of priests and laymen of a bishopric) of 1908 noticed, huge marriage fees could force the believers to accept only civil marriage; however, until the outburst of World War I, the number of such marriage was relatively small in the case of Orthodox people (Soroștineanu, 2006, p. 161).

At the end of the 19th, the legislation introduced by the Hungarian government amended the provisions of the previous ecclesiastic legislation concerning the minimum legal age for marriage. So far, according to the legislation in force, girls could

marry at the age of 12, while boys at the age of 14. Thus, *The Law concerning Catholic marriages in the Austrian Empire* of 1856 stipulated that “boys under the age of 14 and girls under the age of 12 could not get married (although physically developed) without a licence” (*Buletinul*, 1856, p. 522); Greek-catholic legislation also mentioned that “according to Canons, boys under the age of 14 and girls under the age of 12 cannot conclude marriage” (*Conciliul*, 1886), while the Orthodox bishop Andrei Şaguna, according to the Apostles’ rules and doctrines, considered that this was not possible for “boys younger than 14 and girls under 12” (Şaguna, 1868, p. 58, the same author recommended in another work “the compliance with imperial orders, such as: a 22-year old groom and a 15-year old bride; old people can only get married after obtaining religious and political licence” cf. Şaguna, 1854, p. 5sq). Although there are not many documents attesting this, marriages concluded between such young people were often a failure as, usually, partners were not ready for family life and the responsibilities involved by the change in their civil status. Consequently, the state tried to “extend” the minimum chronological limits stipulated in the ecclesiastic legislation; Law XXXI of 1894 stipulated that “people under a certain age could not get married; man reaches maturity at the age of 18, while woman at the age of 16”; only the Ministry of Justice was entitled to grant age licences for marriage (Laday, 1924, p. 199).

AFTER HAVING presented some factors/agents of the change in the matrimonial behaviour of the Romanians in Transylvania, let us now discuss about **some tangible effects** the modernisation of family forming conditions and of family life cycle during the researched period.

The reduction in the number of marriages between widowers and young women (from 11.1% to 7.9% between 1865 and 1910) also shows certain mentality changes in the field of marriage. We can suppose a “revolt” of unmarried girls, a more and more categorical refusal of the latter to accept marriages with widowers, ordered by their parents because of material interests. Such behaviour of the women’s represents a possible benchmark on the long way of the woman’s emancipation process in Transylvania in the modern era. Of course, the marriage of a girl with a widower usually meant a big difference of age, as well as raising that man’s children and sparing her husband’s and the dead woman’s relatives; thus, it was an unpleasant situation, not at all enviable.

Divorce, the last resort to the confines of an unhappy marriage, was no stranger to the family life cycle in the Transylvanian village. It was a solution far from easily accepted by either the family or the community, the new, divorced status marginalising the individual and pushing him/her to the fringes of the community. Thus, it was not uncommon for a couple to put up with an unhappy life destiny to their death to avoid the “village gossip.” For whereas domestic fights, scandals, violence and heavy drinking were public knowledge, the community would tolerate these in order to prevent the break-up of marriage and “shamefulness of divorce.” Com-

munity censorship could not always alter, however, the decision of the partners to end their marriage, as personal happiness and the escape from misery, rose above the status within community. Shame in the eyes of the community was preferred to the physical abuse of the husband.

Demographically speaking, the number of divorced people in Transylvania can only be studied accordingly towards the end of the 19th century. Censuses show very clearly the ascending trend followed by the percentage of divorced people; it increased from 0.1% in 1890 to 0.2% in 1900 and 0.3% in 1910. Of course, such an evolution was not only the result of the introduction of civil legislation in the issued related to marriage in 1894-1895, but also the normal modernising tendency of the demographic behaviour in Transylvania, as it happened in other cultural areas.

Another perspective on the modernisation of the demographic and mental behaviour in Transylvania before World War I was the issue of religious and ethnical **mixed marriages**. Against this background, it is very interesting to retrace the attitude to mixed marriages of the Central Europeans', to a mode that is, which, along with other social and political mechanisms, was likely to be conducive to an alteration of ethnic and confessional identity.

According to the statistics we have access to at present, we can reconstitute the dynamics of mixed marriages in Transylvania for about half a century, respectively for the period between 1866 and 1889. We thus note above all a great regional diversity in the intensity of the phenomenon we study. Thus, there are administrative and territorial units with a low or extremely low rate of mixed marriages, such as: the Ciuc Seat (Roman Catholic for its larger part), where the rate of denominationally mixed marriages varied annually between 1866-1875 within a margin of 0.8% and one of 2.8%; the county of Zarand (mainly Orthodox), which, in the same period, featured a rate ranging between 0.7% and 2.3%; the Cincul Mare Seat, with the limits ranging between a minimum of 0.8% and maximum of 4.3%; the county of Maramureş with a rate ranging between 1.3% and 3%; and the county of Solnocul de Mijloc, with rates between 1.9% and 3.3%. At the opposite pole, we find units featuring considerably higher rates, such as: the county of Alba de Jos with a lower rate of 11.6% in 1871 and maximum of 13.8% in 1875; the county of Făgăraş with a lower rate of 10% and a maximum of 17.2%; the Seat of Odorhei, with rates ranging between 9.3% and 12.4%; the Seat of Mureş with rates between 11.4% and 16.1%, etc. (Bolovan & Bolovan, 2008, p. 110).

An attempt to trace associations between variables in the mixed marriages rate featuring a certain ethnic group runs the risk of not withstanding rigorous examination. In the Szekely Seats, for instance, we note opposite attitudes toward this phenomenon, the Ciuc Seat being representative for denominational endogamy while the Seats of Odorhei and Trei Scaune featured a rate of mixed marriages 10% higher than Ciuc. Likewise, among the Saxon seats, we note modest rates, (Cincul Mare, Miercurea) or, on the contrary, higher rates: (the Orăştie, Nocrich seats etc.). Also in the case of the Romanians densely populating the counties of Zarand or

Hunedoara, the attitudes to mixed marriages varied considerably: Zarand featured a very low rate, whereas Hunedoara one 5% higher on the average than Zarand, the district of Făgăraș standing out with even higher rates.

Against the background outlined above, we deem as pertinent accounts of regional variations of mixed marriages only those case studies taking into account the local realities, matrimonial traditions and practices, ethno-denominational structures, the structures of relief, etc. Only interdisciplinary approaches can contribute the knowledge added value necessary for the understanding of the circumstances that determined the expansion with time of the marital selection areas beyond the community space of the partners' own denomination and ethnic group. A like expansion of the partner selection from outside the community area accommodates an array of cultural connotations "pertaining to the axiological systems of the social groups, the degree of religious tolerance, the customs systems and the symbolical values attached to one ethnic and religious group or another" (Bolovan & Bolovan, 2008, p. 111).

What is striking is the considerable increase in mixed marriages in the urban communities, in contrast with the rural hinterland. In the case of the bigger cities featuring in statistics, (i.e. Timișoara, Arad, Oradea, Satu Mare, Cluj, Târgu-Mureș), we note a ratio c. 4-5 times higher of mixed denominational marriages compared to the rest of the county. To exemplify, in the town of Arad, the rates of the phenomenon under research were of 18.3%–8% compared to the 4.3%–.8% of the rest of the county. In Timișoara, the variation of mixed marriages situated between 12.2% and 22.8%, while in the rest of the county only between 3.4% and 4.9%; as far as the city of Cluj is concerned, the rate varied between 34.9% and 47.9%, and in the rest of the Cojocna county the rates ranged between 9.2% and 11.3%. The ethno-denominational diversity in the cities was, as expected, considerably more distinct than in the countryside.

Hence, the richer choice that city's dwellers benefited from in selecting their partners out of a wider range of ethno-denominational diversity than in the rural setting. To these add the restrictions at work in villages concerning matrimonial strategies visibly altered by the less conformist behaviour and the more permeable attitudes toward contracting a marriage partner from outside the social group to which the individual belonged. The first observation that needs to be made concerns the increase in mixed marriages rates from one year to the next. Thus, whereas between 1881-1885 records feature an average of 11,643 mixed marriages per year, during the last 5 years of the nineteenth century, the rates went up to c. 15,300. In percentages, the rate of mixed marriages between 1881 and 1885 was of 8.1%, between 1886-1890 of 8.8%, and between 1891-1895 of 9.1%, while between 1896-1900 of 11.1%. It marks a 2-percentage rate growth which can be primarily accounted for by the consequences of the changes in legislation implemented by the Hungarian government in 1895, namely the secularisation of the civil marriages registrations. The results of this legislation whereby the state displaced the control

exerted by the church over fundamental stages in the lives of the individual (birth, marriage, death) were also felt at the level of a “liberalisation” of sorts of mixed marriages from a primarily religious point of view. Thus, after the changes in legislation implemented in 1895, the church was forced to accept more easily the denominationally mixed marriages, in order not to arouse dissatisfaction among the congregation on account of its spiritual intransigency. Also, the mental pervasiveness of the different ethnic groups cohabitating in the Hungary of the time underwent slight transformations in the sense of a higher propensity for mixed marriages (primarily denominational, but also ethnic in connotations).

Naturally, in examining mixed marriages, indeed denominational, and especially ethnic exogamy, one has to take into account without bias, the degree of ethnic mix characterising the locality, the matrimonial market in the locality of residence or neighbouring area, etc., as well as the provisions of the canonical law, and the religious prescriptions of the main denominations in Transylvania as regards marriages. There is evidence that toward the end of the nineteenth century, as the state undergoes the process of secularisation and the influence of the church diminishes, there occur certain transformations in the attitude toward mixed marriages of various denominations in Transylvania, a greater degree of permissiveness to contracting a marriage with a member of a different denomination or ethnic group being noticeable. The modernisation of society, the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation that accompanied the evolution of the province during the last decades before the outbreak of World War I, made way to a greater mobility among the population, which more often than not resulted in relocation and the contracting of a marriage with a partner outside one’s own denomination or ethnic group (Bolovan & Bolovan, 2008, p. 112sq). The regional variation that is noticeable calls for an ensuing horizontal enquiry into the dynamics of mixed marriages in Transylvania, as many case studies based on rural and town samples as possible, which alone can provide an edifying overview of a phenomenon replete with social and cultural significances.

Illegitimacy forms a part of the general birth rate anything but negligible at the time. The frequent occurrence of extra-marital births, or else of illegitimate births, has been given various interpretations across the decades, and was traditionally regarded as an indicator of social disorganisation, of immorality or loss of internal control and cohesion by the family (Shorter & Knodel & van de Walle, 1971, p. 376). From a different perspective, it is interesting to observe the dynamics of illegitimate births in the period between the 1848 Revolution and World War I. A first aspect to be noticed is the gradual increase of the gross number of illegitimate births from the beginning of the period until the end of the 19th century in almost all counties of the province.

IN THE first years after the 1848 Revolution (1851-1857), the annual average rate of illegitimate births in Transylvania was of 3.9%, a rate that was similar with that of Hungary (3.4%), lower than that of Croatia-Slovenia (4.8%) and a lot higher than the one at the military border (1.3%), where military rigor led to a higher sense of morality (Konek, 1868, p. 30). In the middle of the next decade, the situation of illegitimacy underwent major transformations: thus, in the year 1865, 5.31 (7%) out of the 72,640 births featuring in the records for Transylvania were illegitimate (Magyar, 1872). The marked difference between the first post-revolution decade and the seventh decade rests upon an irrefutable argument regarding the transformations in mentalities that occurred in the middle of the past century, after the dissolving of feudal relations, the advancement of urbanisation, in general, and the modernisation of society. In the decades to follow, the rates of illegitimacy in Transylvania maintained on a scale between 6 and 8%. Thus, in 1866 it reached 8.6%, only to drop slightly and reach stable figures for a while as follows: 7.8% in 1867, 7.4% in 1868, 6.9% in 1869, 6.8% in 1870, 6.6% in 1871, 6.4% in 1872, 6.4% in 1873, 6.7% in 1877, etc.

For instance, the ratio of illegitimacy in Ardeova between 1851 and 1914 was of 5.1%, which places the locality in mid-position relative to other villages in the county of Cluj: Gilău 1.8%, Așchileu Mic 4.8%, Iclod 6.6%, etc. To return to Ardeova, what is striking is the uneven distribution of illegitimate births across the decades: 3 children between 1851-1890 and 40 between 1890-1914 (Bolovan, 1999, p. 123). A similar tendency of a higher rate of illegitimacy in the decades prior to World War I is noted in the case of other localities under research, which can be accounted for by at least two hypotheses. On the one hand, after 1894, because of the enforcement of lay legislation in civil registry matters, the influence of the church over the matrimonial and moral lives of the individuals diminished; it seemed befitting that in a circular letter of 1899, archbishop Ioan Mețianu complained about the spreading among Romanians of the “religious indifference” (Soroștineanu, 2006, p. 54sqq).

Undoubtedly, family and matrimonial relations to the Romanians in Transylvania before World War I looked differently from what they had been at the middle of the 19th century. Retracing the rural universe from a historical perspective remained for a long time marked by a tendency to idealise the village world as a cradle of individuals evincing a “healthy” conduct, in sharp contrast with the vice-prone, cosmopolitan, depersonalised conduct common to city dwellers. This invites historians, demographers, sociologists, ethnologists, anthropologists, etc. to deepen their research undertakings in the future by way of approaching a wider range of samples. Oversimplifications and the cultivation of clichés cannot but prove lacking to the pursuit of knowledge in the field. Approaches to the family and the matrimonial behaviour in the Transylvania of mid-19th century and World War I reflect abundantly the modernisation tendencies undergone by the Transylvanian society. Although secularisation, which made significant headway toward the end

of the 19th century, gave an impetus to the modernisation phenomenon, the decisive factors were the socio-economic developments ensuing the dissolution of feudal relations and the construction of a society based on market economy and industrialism, which made their mark upon the individual and the community.

Gradually, in the Transylvania of the years prior to the Great War, a growing number of individuals stopped being prisoners of outside forces (be they religion, community, family, etc) and were increasingly animated by the desire of fulfilling their own desires and interests. Paradoxically, the state met their expectations, first by eliminating the canonical impediments, freeing the individual from a host of religious constraints, an emancipating action that was taken however to serve the interest of the state. What came of the historical demography perspective was an evident emancipation of the individual coupled with the liberalisation of family and matrimonial relationships.

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Abstract

From Tradition to Modernisation.

The Romanian Family in Transylvania in the Modern Era (1850-1918)

The investigation of families and of matrimonial behavior with the Transylvanian Romanians between the middle of the 19th century and World War I, in the context of the general population of the province (in 1850 the Romanians represented roughly 55% of the population of Transylvania) fully reveals the modernizing tendencies affecting Transylvanian society at that time. Our paper presents the agents of change, the factors that altered demographic behavior and family relations with the Romanians, as well as the visible, measurable effects of these developments. The end of feudalism in Transylvania after the Revolution of 1848 brought with it a change in judicial and socio-economic relations, presently based on an economy of exchanges and of capital transfers, on the circulation of labor, etc., but also a different marital behavior and new moral norms within the community. The increased mobility of the population (the increased number of seasonal wage-seekers traveling inside and outside the province, emigration, the early urbanization and industrialization, etc.) also affected Transylvania, in terms of human relations, of the areas and criteria for marital selection, of the family lifecycle, and especially of the ecclesiastical authority over private matters. If, until that point, the Church had been legally given almost full control over all matters pertaining to birth, marriage, and death, gradually, in the second half of the 19th century, as the society became more secular and the state increasingly modern, the competences of the Church were gradually transferred to the state. In 1894–1895, the Hungarian state passed a number of laws that secularized all marital affairs, marital life, and divorces. The secularization, which made considerable progress towards the turn of the 20th century, stimulated the modernization process, but essential in this respect were the social and economic developments following the end of feudalism and the establishment of an industrial capitalist society, with its massive impact upon both individuals and communities. Gradually, before World War I, more and more people in Transylvania ceased to obey a higher authority (religion, community, family, etc.) and began to pursue their own interests and desires. Paradoxically enough, the state authorities supported them, limiting the religious constraints, as dictated by the interests of the state itself. The outcome was individual emancipation and a liberalization of family and matrimonial relations, not only with the Romanians, but also within the entire population.

Keywords

Habsburg Monarchy, Transylvania, modern times, Romanian family